

## Level: High School

### Literature

#### Concept Questions:

What does “captivity” mean?

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(3-2-1-0)

What does “liberated” mean?

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(3-2-1-0)

What is a disinfectant?

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(3-2-1-0)

What do you think “re-education” means in the context of this story?

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(3-2-1-0)

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_ /12 = \_\_\_\_\_ %

\_\_\_\_\_ FAM \_\_\_\_\_ UNFAM

### “Where the Ashes Are—Part 3”

*Now I want you to read the next section, and when you come to the word STOP in the text, I want you to*



*tell me what you are thinking. When you have finished reading, I will ask you to tell me what you remember and then I will ask you questions.*

We lost track of the time as the soldiers sorted out all the people gathered in front of the guest-house. At last, however, they accepted my father’s protestations that he was not a general but a government functionary. He and the other men were taken inside the mansion. Women and children were sent to a neighboring building, down into a long rectangular basement with extremely thick walls and a single narrow door at one end. The rocket explosions had ceased, but the sound of gunfire continued. We had become accustomed to it and no longer jumped at the bursts from automatic weapons. Ten families followed each other below ground. I ended up leading the way into the darkness. **STOP**

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“Go to the far end. Go!” my mother urged me, and made sure that Dieu-Quynh stayed with us. She knew that, on capturing a town, the Communists would use residents as workers to support military operations. Women would be sent to look for

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food, or nurse the wounded. If not required to take up arms themselves, men would have to gather the wounded and the dead. Dieu-Quynh, a tall girl of eighteen, was at risk of being drafted for such service. Turning to the family behind her, my mother explained. “My daughter is ill. A big girl, but not all that wise.” It was an explanation she would feel compelled to repeat often in the next days. I finally settled for a spot below a minuscule window with iron bars. In the damp, cavernous basement, the tiny hole let in a faint ray of the light that signaled the first day of the Year of the Monkey.

**STOP**

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Throughout that day and most of the next night the adults carried on a whispered debate, trying to make sense out of what had happened. “They can’t win,” the guesthouse chauffeur pronounced. “I bet they’ll retreat soon. The Americans will bomb, and our troops will rescue us in a few days.” My mother listened dispassionately. She sighed often and refused to eat any of the food the family next to us offered. Busy with their prisoners in the mansion, the soldiers left us alone. **STOP**

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In our second day of captivity, a female voice shouted into the basement. “Mrs. Dai! Is there a Mrs. Dai down there?” My mother picked her way toward the door. “Your husband’s up in the house. He wants to see you,” the voice announced. My mother went up alone, warning me to keep my sister Dieu-Quynh from wandering out. During the night, Dieu-Quynh had been difficult, continually demanding hot water. For the last year or so she had been obsessed with matters of hygiene, compulsively washing her hands as well as any household utensils before she would use them. Finally realizing that this was a luxury, she now sat silent and withdrawn. I asked Dieu-Ha to stay with her, then went to sit at the door to wait for my mother. **STOP**

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The guns had gone quiet at some point without anyone noticing. More soldiers had arrived in the compound and were now setting up a crude

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hospital. A stretched-out army poncho served as an awning, sheltering three bamboo cots that had been shoved together. The soldiers put a mat of woven branches and leaves on top of the cots, enlarging the surface to accommodate five wounded men. Looking like pallbearers carrying a white porcelain coffin, three young men and a woman in civilian clothes brought in an ancient French bathtub. They filled the tub half full of water, warning us not to use it. No one seemed to be in charge, yet a lot of orders were being issued. Sitting by the door of the basement, I watched the men and women from the North while waiting for my mother. **STOP**

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“What are you doing here?” she asked when she returned, roughing up my hair. “We’re going up to see your father in a while.” She did not sound excited. After checking on my sisters, she set about looking for food for my father. “Ma, what are they going to do with him?” I asked. I repeated the question again and again, but my mother would only shake her head; finally she responded, “Oh, he’ll be all right. They said all he needed was a few days of re-education. They’re taking him somewhere, but he’ll be back.”

Taken where? Would we be rescued first? Would they let him go? I didn’t think she knew the answers to my questions. I tugged at her sleeve. “Ma, what’s ‘re-education’?” She glanced at the wounded Viet Cong lying beneath the poncho. “It’s like school, that’s all. Now help me with this pot.”

**STOP**

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Spoiled since her youth by household servants, my mother had rarely gone near a kitchen. Now she was cooking a big pot of rice she had secured from a woman in the basement. The Viet Cong had set up a few clay burners and gave us some coal. Other than the rice, there was nothing to cook. We ate it with pickled leeks and cucumber, which normally accompanied fancier foods during Tet. The rice tasted of the river water my mother had used to cook it in. The Viet Cong had allowed her only a small amount of water from the bathtub to take to my father. She was happy to have cleaner water for him to drink—until she tasted it. It smelled of Mercurochrome, the red disinfectant common in Vietnam. The soldiers had used the water to wash the wounds of injured men, then poured back unused portions, now laced with Mercurochrome. She found a tiny bit of tea to

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steep in the water and packed some rice into a big bowl for my father. **STOP**

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I sensed that my father was happy to see us, but his face showed no such emotion. He took the woven basket Ma handed him, which contained a towel, two T-shirts, and a pair of pants she had found on her previous trip to the guesthouse to see him. “There’s no need—you will be well provided for,” a Viet Cong cadre said. “You’ll be in re-education for just a short time. Now that the region is liberated, you’ll be allowed to come back soon.”

In the big hall across from the master suite, my father kept caressing my head. I couldn’t think of much to say. Some prisoners crouched along the wall, watching us. Others were curled up on the floor like shrimps. My mother gave my father the bowl of rice and the tea. I waited to see if he could taste the Mercurochrome, but I couldn’t tell from his expression. **STOP**

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I glanced around my parents’ bedroom. It had been turned upside down. The book my father had been reading about Giap and Westmoreland still lay by his bed. My mother’s jewelry and toilet case had had a hole gashed through it with a crude knife.

“Your mother will take you over to your grandparents’ in a few days,” Cha said. “I’ll be back after a time.”

Later, sometime past midnight, Communist soldiers took my father and a dozen other men away. Standing on a stool with my mother at my side, I watched through the tiny basement window. A rope was hooked through my father’s elbows and tied behind his back, while his wrists were bound together in front of his chest. He was also tied to the man in front of him. It would be sixteen years before I saw him again. **STOP**

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### Retelling Scoring Sheet for “Where the Ashes Are—Part 3”

#### Setting/Background

- \_\_\_ They accepted my father’s protestations  
\_\_\_ that he was not a general.

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### Goal

- \_\_\_ He and the other men were taken
- \_\_\_ inside the mansion.
- \_\_\_ Women and children were sent
- \_\_\_ into a basement.

### Events

- \_\_\_ I led the way.
- \_\_\_ Mother knew that
- \_\_\_ women would be sent
- \_\_\_ to look for food
- \_\_\_ or nurse the wounded.
- \_\_\_ Men would have to gather the wounded
- \_\_\_ and the dead.
- \_\_\_ Dieu-Quynh was at risk
- \_\_\_ of being drafted for this.
- \_\_\_ “My daughter is ill,”
- \_\_\_ mother explained.
- \_\_\_ The soldiers left us alone.
- \_\_\_ “Your husband wants to see you,”
- \_\_\_ a voice announced.
- \_\_\_ My mother went up alone.
- \_\_\_ She returned.

### Goal

- \_\_\_ “We’re going to see your father
- \_\_\_ in a while.”

### Events

- \_\_\_ “What are they going to do to him?”
- \_\_\_ I asked.
- \_\_\_ “Oh, he’ll be all right.
- \_\_\_ They said
- \_\_\_ all he needed was re-education.
- \_\_\_ They’re taking him somewhere,
- \_\_\_ but he’ll be back.”
- \_\_\_ “What’s re-education?”
- \_\_\_ “It’s like school.”
- \_\_\_ Ma was happy
- \_\_\_ to have water
- \_\_\_ for my father to drink
- \_\_\_ until she tasted it.
- \_\_\_ It smelled
- \_\_\_ of Mercurochrome.
- \_\_\_ The soldiers had used the water

- \_\_\_ to wash the wounds
- \_\_\_ of men
- \_\_\_ and then poured back portions
- \_\_\_ now laced with Mercurochrome.
- \_\_\_ My father was happy to see us,
- \_\_\_ but his face showed no such emotion.
- \_\_\_ I glanced around my parents’ bedroom.
- \_\_\_ It had been turned upside down.

### Resolution

- \_\_\_ Sometime past midnight,
- \_\_\_ soldiers took my father away
- \_\_\_ with other men.
- \_\_\_ A rope was hooked through his elbows
- \_\_\_ and tied behind his back
- \_\_\_ while his wrists were bound together
- \_\_\_ in front of his chest.
- \_\_\_ He was also tied to the man
- \_\_\_ in front of him.
- \_\_\_ It would be years
- \_\_\_ sixteen years
- \_\_\_ before I saw him again.

60 Ideas

Number of ideas recalled \_\_\_\_\_

Other ideas recalled, including summary statements and inferences:

### Questions for “Where the Ashes Are Part—3”

1. What was this section of the story about?  
*Implicit:* the capture of the family and/or the separation of the father from the rest of the family

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2. Describe the basement where the mother and children were kept.  
*Explicit:* it was rectangular; it had thick walls; a single narrow door; a tiny window with bars; it was damp (The reader should remember at least two of the details.)

3. Why didn't the family jump anymore when they heard gunfire?  
*Explicit:* they had gotten used to it

4. Why did the mother feel it necessary to protect the daughter, Dieu-Quynh?  
*Implicit:* this daughter was suffering from a mental disorder

5. Describe the hospital that the soldiers were setting up.  
*Explicit:* it was crude; it had a poncho as an awning; there were three cots; branches and leaves were put on the cots; there was an old bathtub filled with water (The reader should remember at least two of these details.)

6. Why was it unusual for Mrs. Dai to be cooking?  
*Implicit:* she had been spoiled as a youth by having servants, so she had rarely been near a kitchen

7. What did it mean that the father had to have "re-education"?  
*Implicit:* he had to learn to think like the Viet Cong

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8. What did the mother bring to the father to eat and drink?

*Explicit:* rice and tea made from water with a red disinfectant in it

9. Where was the family going to stay after the father left?

*Explicit:* at their grandparents' house

10. Where do you think Cha went at the end of the story, and why?

*Implicit:* to prison or to a work camp, because he was tied up and being forced to go (To get full credit, the reader should give a reason for the answer.)

### Without Look-Backs

Number Correct Explicit: \_\_\_\_

Number Correct Implicit: \_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Independent: 9–10 correct

\_\_\_\_ Instructional: 7–8 correct

\_\_\_\_ Frustration: 0–6 correct

### With Look-Backs

Number Correct Explicit: \_\_\_\_

Number Correct Implicit: \_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Independent: 9–10 correct

\_\_\_\_ Instructional: 7–8 correct

\_\_\_\_ Frustration: 0–6 correct

### Think-Aloud Summary

#### Think-Aloud Statements That Indicate Understanding

Paraphrasing/Summarizing \_\_\_\_\_

Making New Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

Questioning That Indicates Understanding \_\_\_\_\_

Noting Understanding \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Prior Knowledge \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying Personally \_\_\_\_\_

#### Think-Aloud Statements That Indicate Lack of Understanding

Questioning That Indicates Lack of Understanding \_\_\_\_\_

Noting Lack of Understanding \_\_\_\_\_